

The Women's Sports Foundation Report Brief: Her Life Depends On It III & Collegiate Coaching and Athletic Administration

In a June 2015 article published in *Time*, economist David Berri reported that out of the top 50 men's tennis players in the world only one — Andy Murray — was coached by a woman (formerly top-ranked tennis pro Amelie Mauresmo). Commenting on the paucity of women coaches, Murray said:

"When I was young, I wasn't thinking about stuff like that. But now I've seen it with my own eyes, it's quite amazing how few female coaches there are in any sport."

As a matter of perspective, there once was a time when women dominated the coaching ranks for women's sports, at least at the college level. According to an ongoing 37-year longitudinal study of the state of collegiate coach and athletics administration, in 1972 more than 90% of coaches of women's teams were women.¹ Despite female participation in college sport increasing by more than 584% in 42 years (1972-2014), women have lost considerable ground in the areas of program leadership and decision-making within college and university athletic programs.²

Women who wish to pursue careers in college sport encounter hiring and promotion issues, pay equity concerns, and issues associated with fair treatment. For women of color, they often experience double jeopardy, facing both race and gender discrimination.

By the Percentages: Women's Representation in Collegiate Coaching & Administration

- By 2014 women represented 42.9% of head coaches of NCAA women's sports teams.³ For 30 years, the percentage of women coaching men's intercollegiate teams remained under 2%.⁴
- Between 2004 and 2014, there was a slight up-tick with 2 to 3% of men's teams being coached by women.⁵
- Of the 13,222 paid assistant coach positions available within NCAA schools in 2013-14, 56.8% were held by women; 43.2% were held by men.⁶



The representation of women in administrative and staff positions within athletic departments in NCAA colleges and universities in 2013-14 was as follows:⁷

- Women administrators directed 90% of women's intercollegiate sports programs in 1972, compared with 32.4% of such programs in 2013-14.
- Of the 1,131 directors of athletics, 20.2% (229) were women.
- Women were underrepresented in the athletic director ranks across all three NCAA divisions. In Division I, females were 10% of the 350 athletic directors; in Division II, 17.6% (57/323); and in Division III, 29.4% (135/458).
- Twenty-eight percent of those working in the role of conference commissioner were women. Broken down by divisional affiliation, more than a third of Division III conferences were led by women. In Division I, one in five conference commissioners were women (10/50). Eight percent of Division II conference commissioners were women (2/25).

- Across the expanse of positions in athletic departments, women were congregated in roles that are student-life and academically oriented (academic counselor — 61%; life skills counselor — 71%). Women in athletic departments were most represented in administrative assistant roles (94%).
- Women were less likely to be represented in positions charged to lead efforts in the areas of money generation (promotions — 37%); control of information (sports information director — 13%); fund raising (33%); head athletic trainer (31%); and strength and conditioning coach (14%).

Pay Inequities for Collegiate Coaches and Athletics Administrators

- Gentry and Alexander (2012) reported that the average salary for the coach of an NCAA Division I men's team in any sport between 2003 and 2010 increased by 67% to \$267,007. The average salary for a coach of a women's team in the same division rose by only 16% during the same period of time, amounting to \$98,106. Those gaps are likely much larger because this analysis takes into account only university-awarded salary and not additional compensation that may come from speaking engagements, reduced rate loans, bonuses and other categories of compensation.
- In 2009-10, NCAA Division I men's coaches had a median salary of \$329,300, nearly double the median salary for head coaches of women's teams, which was \$171,600.⁸
- In a comparison of men's and women's head basketball coaches between the years 2006-07 through 2009-10, the median pay for the men increased by 47% compared to a 28% increase for coaches of women's teams.⁹
- For the academic year 2012-13, wage disparities between coaches of men's and women's teams were even more pronounced. The average salary of an NCAA Division I-A coach of a men's team was \$517,321; for coach of a women's team, \$145,892.¹⁰
- During the decade between 2003 and 2013, the salaries of an NCAA Division I-A head coach of a men's team more than doubled from \$207,774 to \$517,321. In comparison, average salaries for coaches of women's teams increased from \$93,486 in 2003 to \$145,892 in 2013.¹¹
- While the average salary of an assistant coach of a men's team in the NCAA Division I in 2012-13 was just over \$160,000, an assistant coach of a woman's

team was earning on average nearly \$100,000 less (approximately \$64,000).¹²

- Gendered wage gaps in average salaries for head coaches of men's and women's teams exist across all divisions, whether schools offer football or not. In NCAA Division III institutions that sponsor football, a gap of more than \$8,500 existed in average head coach salaries for men's and women's teams while the gap decreased to less than \$3,000 for Division III non-football playing institutions.¹³
- According to Schneider, Stier, Henry and Wilding (2010), a group of 406 senior woman administrators serving NCAA schools identified wage discrimination as a top factor that discouraged women's advancement in the college sport industry.
- Asked about how satisfied they were with their salaries, 33% of female college coaches surveyed by Kamphoff (2010) expressed dissatisfaction. Nearly 75% of those coaches agreed that inequitable pay was an issue that discouraged women in college sport.



- In a nationwide survey of coaches of women's teams, more than 40% of female coaches said they were "discriminated against because of their gender," compared to 28% of their male colleagues. Almost half (48%) of the female coaches and just over a quarter of the male coaches (27%) in the study reported "being paid less for doing the same job as other coaches." Twice as many female coaches as male coaches felt their performance was evaluated differently because of gender (15% versus 6%).¹⁴

Reasons for Less Representation of Women in Collegiate Coaching & Athletics Administration

Whereas the Acosta and Carpenter (2014) study provides baseline data to demonstrate this decline, several other studies in recent years have yielded findings that offer insight into the perceptions of female college athletes and the degree to which they aspire to pursue careers in athletics. They also provide possible explanations for why there are so few women coaches and athletics administrators at the college level.

A three-part study of NCAA member institutions in 2007-08 examined the perceptions of female athletes, coaches and athletics administrators about careers in athletics. Approximately 30% of 8,900 female athlete respondents indicated they would likely or very likely have a career in athletics or exercise science. Of that group, 16% indicated that their long-term career goal was to work in college athletics.¹⁵

Of the nearly 70% of NCAA female athletes who indicated that they did not anticipate pursuing a career in college sport, 70% expressed a desire for a higher salary than they could

expect to earn in college coaching, while approximately 60% of respondents expressed concern about the time demands of the job. When asked to identify reasons they believe qualified women leave careers in intercollegiate athletics, NCAA female athletes identified time requirements (37%), salary (27%), and unfavorable gender discrimination (11%) as the top three.¹⁶

- The perception among female college athletes that coaches of women's teams are not compensated equitably is borne out in a study of head coach and assistant coach salaries for colleges and universities in the state of Ohio between 2002-03 and 2005-06. Using EADA data, the wage gap for coaches of women's teams increased during those four years from approximately \$7,500 to \$13,440. There was also a gap in assistant coach compensation favoring coaches of men's teams, with assistant coaches of women's teams earning on average \$5,000 to \$6,000 less than assistant coaches of men's teams were making.¹⁷
- In the 2005-2006 NCAA Gender Equity Report,¹⁸ the average Division I athletic department spent \$1,202,400 on salaries for male coaches and \$659,000 on salaries for female coaches. Athletic departments, on average, spent \$1,128,110 on salaries for male assistant coaches and \$481,700 on salaries for female assistant coaches.
- In a study of 201 (100 males, 101 females) Division I athletes measuring intentions to coach and identifying perceived barriers to entering the coaching profession, women collegiate athletes expressed less interest in coaching at all levels except the youth/recreational level than did their male counterparts. Results mirrored the absence of female coaches at each level, where women athletes were less inclined to consider coaching at Division I and professional sport, arenas where there are fewer female coaches.¹⁹
- In the Kamphoff and Gill (2008) study, female college athletes were more likely to agree that women coaches receive different treatment than men coaches, evidencing an awareness that discrimination does exist in the coaching ranks.
- Female athletes may, in fact, be basing their perceptions on their observations of the few female coaches with whom they interact. According to the 1,475 female coaches in another study, 32% believed that they did not have work-life balance in their careers. Work-life balance appears to be even more difficult to achieve for female athletics administrators. Of the 1,107 surveyed for this study, 40% indicated they did not have balance between their work and personal lives.²⁰





In addition to research examining perceptions of female athletes, there is a growing body of research that examines the actual experiences of female coaches including their perceptions of gender bias and gender discrimination.

- Most recently, in 2016, the Women's Sports Foundation released research designed to generate facts and analysis of the workplace experiences and views of both female and male coaches of intercollegiate women's sports in order to determine what has contributed to this decline of women coaches. This research was unique in that it is the first to assess male coaches of women's teams and make comparisons with female coaches.²¹
- Using an online focus group interview format, 41 mothers who are NCAA Division I head coaches discussed issues related to conflicts between work and family. Results indicated that work-family conflict affects work outcomes, including staffing patterns, relationships with athletes, and team performance, as well as relationships at home, where they feel diminished time for children, spouses or partners and other family members. Head coaches who were mothers also commented on the guilt and exhaustion they experience and their efforts to maintain perspective and balance.²²

- Documenting the experiences of five college coaches, Cruz (2009) explored what she called the "microcompetitions" that are the hallmarks of a female coach's experience and very existence working in a male-dominated setting. She found that female coaches face a number of dilemmas on a daily basis – routine lack of respect from colleagues, challenges in being seen as competent, threats to their economic and personal survival — as they attempt to maintain their equilibrium in a culture that is both hypercompetitive and masculine.
- In a nationwide study of coaches of women's sports, 33% of female coaches indicated that they were vulnerable to potential retaliation if they ask for help with a gender-bias situation. More than 40% of female coaches said they were "discriminated against because of their gender," compared to 28% of their male colleagues. Almost half (48%) of the female coaches and just over a quarter of the male coaches (27%) in the study reported "being paid less for doing the same job as other coaches." Twice as many female coaches as male coaches felt their performance was evaluated differently because of gender (15% versus 6%).²³
- Reporting on the culture of athletic departments and workplace expectations, Dixon and Bruening (2007) found that a large majority of women head coaches (38 out of 41) believed there was flexibility in work situations that allowed for bringing children to the office, working at home when necessary, and otherwise adjusting to the demands of work and family. Three of the coaches reported a work environment that was very different, stressing that colleagues and administration were not as tolerant of women bringing children to work and noting that supervisors believed accommodations to family life disrupt time in the office.

According to 70% of the female coach respondents and 95% of female athletics administrators studied, qualified women do not apply for open positions in coaching and athletics administration. Further, 40% of the female administrators and 60% of the female coaches believed that the most qualified applicants, regardless of gender, are being hired.²⁴

- Regarding hiring of women in college sport, 83% to 84% of the female administrators in the 2007-08 NCAA study agreed that there was gender discrimination in athletics administration specifically as well as in athletics in general.²⁵

- In a nationwide survey, about two-thirds (65%) of current coaches (male and female) of women's sports felt that it was easier for men to get top-level coaching jobs, while three-quarters (75%) said men had an easier time negotiating salary increases. More than half (54%) believed that men are more likely to be promoted, to secure a multiyear contract upon hiring (52%), and to be rewarded with salary increases for successful performance (53%).²⁶
- According to the Coaching and Gender Equity (CAGE) Project,²⁷ the imbalance in the lives of coaches and athletics administrators does seem to have a substantive foundation. Based on Census 2000 data, full-time male coaches reported working 2,600 hours per year, while full-time female coaches were putting in 2,400 hours per year, far above the averages for women and men in other occupations.
- Describing a “family-unfriendly” work culture, the CAGE report documented that men college coaches were just as likely to be married as other men, while women coaches were far less likely than their female counterparts in other occupations to be married (29.8%, compared to 55.3%).²⁸ Although there may be myriad reasons why female coaches may be less likely than their male counterparts to be married (sexual orientation, women in sport possibly being more independent, etc.), nevertheless there is considerable support not just in this study but in the larger discussion regarding work-family conflict to identify this as an issue for coaches and for young women aspiring to become coaches. To further compound this picture, lesbian coaches in same-sex relationships with children may potentially be in a less-tolerant atmosphere in terms of family culture than their heterosexual counterparts, either female or male.

College Coaching and Athletics Administration — The Intersection of Race & Gender

When the college coaching and administrative ranks are examined through the intersection of race and gender, there are signs of progress as well as indicators that change still needs to happen. According to the Black Coaches Association (BCA) Hiring Report Card for 2011-12, from the time the Hiring Report Card started in 2008, “there has been a marked improvement in the opportunities for people of color to become head coaches of women’s basketball teams at FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) institutions” (p. 14) with nearly 20% of head women’s basketball coaches being women of color. While there has been a steady upward trend during the seven years of report card’s existence, there is a great deal more to



be done. In a nationwide survey, 82% of white current coaches felt comfortable expressing concerns about racial and ethnic discrimination whereas only 62% of black current coaches shared that sentiment; overall, women were less comfortable raising these concerns than men.²⁹ Former coaches in the same nationwide survey expressed less comfort, with just 56% of both white and black former coaches feeling comfortable expressing concerns about racial and ethnic discrimination.

In an examination of hiring practices and patterns for the academic year 2012-13 in NCAA FBS institutions and major athletic conferences, Lapchick, Farris, and Rodriguez (2012) reported that 90% of the presidents, 87.5% of the athletic directors, and 100% of the conference commissioners were white; 76%, 84.2%, and 100% of the presidents, athletic directors, and conference commissioners, respectively, were white males; and of the 366 campus leadership positions monitored in this study, 90.7% were held by whites.

- Given the pattern, Lapchick et al. (2012) concluded, “The stagnant nature of diversity in campus leadership does not reflect the America that we know.” (p. 1)
- According to NCAA Race and Gender Demographics for the 2013-14 coaches, athletics administrators and conference commissioners, the stagnation that Lapchick et al. (2012) reported had not improved. Among head coaching ranks for women’s teams, women held 39.8% (4,204 out of 10,554) positions in total.
- Thirty-four percent of women head coaches of women’s teams were white. Only 3.2% of all head coaches of women’s teams were black, with Native American/Alaskan Native, Asian, Hispanic/ Latina, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women as well as women of two or more races and non-resident aliens comprising 1% or less.

- Just over 20% of all directors of athletics were women, with 17% being white women, 2% being black women and the remaining one percent comprised of Asian and Hispanic/Latina women and women of two or more races.
- At the associate director of athletics level, approximately half are women. Of that group, the vast majority are white women (43%).

Hopeful Signs

While the gendered dynamic within the college sport workplace offers challenges to women, there are opportunities.

- In 2010-11, while faculty salaries rose at a rate of 1.8%, their increases lagged behind the 3% increase in inflation. In contrast, coach salaries improved by 9.5%, with football coach salaries rising by 12%. To put this into tangible terms, an assistant coach of an NCAA Division I-A women's program made, on average, more than \$51,000,³⁰ a salary that surpassed the median family income in the United States, which was just over \$50,000.³¹

Adapted from Staurowsky, E. J., DeSousa, M. J., Miller, K. E., Sabo, D., Shakib, S., Theberge, N., Veliz, P., Weaver, A., & Williams, N. (2015). *Her Life Depends On It III: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-Being of American Girls and Women*. East Meadow, NY: Women's Sports Foundation.

The full report can be accessed online at:
www.WomensSportsFoundation.org/HerLifeDependsOnIt3

Endnotes

- ¹ Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; ² Staurowsky, 2016;
- ³ Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; ⁴ Ibid.; ⁵ Ibid.; ⁶ Ibid.; ⁷ Ibid.;
- ⁸ Tyler, 2012; ⁹ Ibid.; ¹⁰ Staurowsky, 2016; ¹¹ Ibid.; ¹² Ibid.;
- ¹³ Ibid.; ¹⁴ Sabo, Veliz & Staurowsky, 2016; ¹⁵ Bracken, 2009;
- ¹⁶ Ibid.; ¹⁷ Staurowsky, Morris, Paule, & Reese, 2007;
- ¹⁸ DeHaas, 2008; ¹⁹ Kamphoff & Gill, 2008; ²⁰ Bracken, 2009;
- ²¹ Sabo, Veliz & Staurowsky, 2016; ²² Bruening & Dixon, 2007;
- ²³ Sabo, Veliz & Staurowsky, 2016; ²⁴ Bracken, 2009; ²⁵ Ibid.;
- ²⁶ Sabo, Veliz & Staurowsky, 2016; ²⁷ Drago et al., 2006; ²⁸ Ibid.;
- ²⁹ Sabo, Veliz & Staurowsky, 2016; ³⁰ EADA, 2011-12;
- ³¹ Staurowsky, 2016

